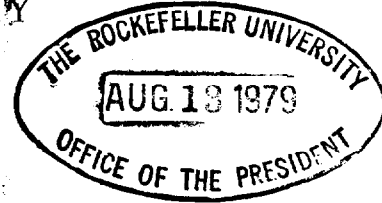


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August 8, 1979

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
The Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Josh:

This was written very quickly, to be used as a basis for part of the President's "Second Annual Report to the Congress on Science and Technology". I will be revising it in a few weeks and will welcome any comments. ✓

I feel a strong need to go further. The public debate over risk is chaotic. A recent set of joint Senate/House/AAAS hearings on risk assessment was uncreative, as have been other symposia... but you know all that. I have been trying to think of the best way to reach an intelligent, leadership audience. What do you think of a careful New Yorker series that becomes a book (Bantam, Penguin, Norton)? Content aside, recent articles, such as those by Brodeur, Commoner, and Dyson, have shown this format to be an extremely effective one. I would build upon Of Acceptable Risk, and would go more into the business of "risk management" (regulation, law, insurance, design, operator error, priority-setting, cross-comparison of major hazards); the roles of technical people (René Dubos urged me in a letter some months ago to work on the issue of the social responsibilities of engineers); and social philosophy (as, for instance, is alluded to in the latter part of the enclosed draft regarding such things as "cooperative federalism" and the disposal of nuclear waste and as has lain at the heart of such debates as the laetrile ruckus). For anecdotal "color", the year could not have provided a livelier palette: Three Mile Island, the big shipwrecks and oilspills, the DC-10 crash, floods in Texas, earthquakes in Vermont, Pinto gastanks, Firestone tires, the saccharin moratorium, nitrites, Skylab.... I greatly need advice on whether and how to pursue this with New Yorker, perhaps a publisher (I have mentioned to Bill Kaufmann my interest, and he understands my preference to go for a larger audience), and so on. Any suggestions?

As to my career, I am frustrated and almost angry about the way things have worked out here. I am committed to teaching in Human Biology through this coming year. Beyond that, nothing has developed. Al Hastorf has nominated me to the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences; with your permission, for which I will telephone you next week, I will give your name as a reference. I will apply for a Guggenheim Fellowship. I may apply

to the Twentieth Century Fund or other foundation for support that I could take with me to any institution. I simply must seek a research base and the time to write!

My apologies for an overly long letter. I would greatly value your counsel.

Cordially,

Bill

William W. Lowrance
Visiting Associate Professor

WWL:ld